Hotel Bethlehem

Bethlehem, Pennsylvania

HOTEL
BETHLEHEM
1921

Erected on the sites of Bethlehem's

First House	1741–1823
Second Store	1794–1823
Eagle Hotel	1823–1920

[Inscription on Corner Stone]

The Corner Stone is cut out of a large stone taken from
the foundation of that part of the Eagle Hotel
that was originally the Second Store
in Bethlehem

Printed by Times Publishing Company, Bethlehem, Pa.
Nineteen Hundred Twenty-One

HISTORICAL SKETCH

By Elizabeth Lehman Myers

BETHLEHEM'S NEW HOTEL will stand on historic ground. The very latest expression of the art of building, constructed with the aid of gigantic mechanical and engineering devices of magical efficiency, will stand where once stood a little 20 x 40 log cabin hewn out of the primeval forest by the pioneer founders of the village with the labor of their hands and the sweat of their brows.

It was in this first house of Bethlehem that the celebrated Christmas Eve service took place which so poetically christened the town after the ancient city of David. The house was completed in the spring of 1741 and occupied at once. Immediate preparations were made for the erection of the next building,—the house still standing on Church Street and known to us as the Gemein Haus, which was nearly enough completed to house Count Zinzendorf and his party, who arrived in December; but it was in the little log cabin that the Christmas Vigils were celebrated. Here the Count, his quick fancy stirred by the immediate proximity of the cattle shed, led the way into that part of the building and began to sing an old chorale which combined the Christmas spirit and missionary thoughts, and the place in which it was sung made the vision of the manger appear very real. It was in this way that the little town of Bethlehem was hailed and the name sanctioned.

Jesus, call Thou me, from the world to Thee;
Speed me ever, stay me never;
Jesus call Thou me.

Not Jerusalem—lowly Bethlehem
'Twas that gave us Christ to save us;
Not Jerusalem.

Favored Bethlehem! honored is that name;
Thence came Jesus to release us;
Favored Bethlehem!

Wondrous Child Divine! warm this heart of mine;
Keep it burning, for Thee yearning,
Wondrous Child Divine!

Do not me reject; let Thy light reflect
From me ever, blessèd Saviour;
Do not me reject.

O that look of love! may I here, above,
Give Thee blessing never ceasing,
For that look of love.

(Adam Drese, 1630-1718; S. C. Chitty, tr., 1890.)

Now the village grew apace. The pioneers had crossed the river from the south, through the ford, and their immediate followers used the ferry which was soon established. It was near the southern terminus of this ferry that the first guest house of the Lehigh Valley was built,—the Crown Inn, famous in the annals of the colony of Pennsylvania, the lodging place of Indian chiefs, of colonial officials, and governors, and Revolutionary soldiers. Within ten years it was found necessary to build a new house of entertainment for man and beast, and the Sun Inn, begun in 1758, was finally opened in 1760, destined to obtain inter-national fame for its hospitality and good cheer.

Thirty years went by, and again it was necessary to provide a big public improvement. The ferry was totally inadequate to take care of the constant stream of travel, and a group of broad-visioned men put through a project for a bridge across the Lehigh. The first store of the village, on Market Street, had also quite outgrown its housing in the Horsefield House, and it was decided that, with the coming erection of the bridge at this time, it was wise to plan for another store building. The site chosen was on south Main Street, now the site of our new hotel. The store was completed on August 30, 1794, and the business was promptly moved into it just one month before the first bridge was opened to traffic, and it became a busy center. The change from shop to hospice came about through private competition, as business had moved up toward Broad Street by degrees and that section of the town seemed destined to be the commercial center of the village. The Board of Supervisors realized this, and in 1822 resolved to remodel the store and create a new hotel. Internal and external changes were required and made, and one thing was done that was inexcusable, then, and now, a century later—the historic log cabin which stood immediately back of the store, and in which Zinzendorf held that beautiful Christmas Eve service in 1741, was torn down to make way for the stabling of horses; so the year 1823 has against it that the cabin of hallowed memories was removed to make way for a livery stable. Before Christmas of that same year the new tavern was opened by Charles David Bishop, its first landlord. It was a substantial, roomy structure, of good proportions and spacious rooms, with walls two feet thick, and boasted a standard wooden sign with a great

golden eagle painted upon it by Peter Grosh, of Lititz, for the name of "The Golden Eagle" was given to the hotel. A long and prosperous life lay before the new venture, for it was soon established as an excellent tavern. One landlord after the other made a name and comfortable fortune there, untroubled by accusing ghosts of the pioneer settlers who vainly hunted for their original home.

In 1843 there began the long and glorious reign of Caleb Yohe as Boniface, a period in which Bethlehem still possessed its early charm and gloried in the natural beauty of its mountains, streams and classic islands. Yohe first rented the hotel, and later purchased it, conducting it to the great pleasure of travellers from far and wide, who sought its comforts whenever possible.

In 1874 the late George H. Myers purchased the hotel, closed it for six months for remodelling, and changed the exterior completely. Up to this time it had not lost the outlines of the old store, but the changes made in 1874 modernized it out of all likeness to the original building. Mr. Myers secured George Hoppes, of the Gettysburg Springs Hotel, and also of the Mansion House, Mauch Chunk, as landlord, and, after the death of Mr. Hoppes, his widow, Mrs. M. B. Hoppes, carried on the business, gaining for it new prestige. This was the day of driving parties, gay riding parties, and the picturesque tally-ho parties with their melodious horns, and the Eagle Hotel was a most popular stop for the delicious food served by the generous landlady. Bethlehem then enjoyed a reputation as a beautiful summer resort which Mrs. Hoppes, and later her son Garret L. Hoppes, assisted materially in developing. After the death of her son, in 1910,

Mrs. Hoppes gave up the Eagle, and several short-term landlords conducted the business until the Hotel Corporation purchased it in 1919 and closed its doors 1794.

In the interval between the cessation of business and the demolition of the building the old edifice served patriotic purposes for various wartime organizations. The Red Cross used it as headquarters in a drive for local memberships; and the Y. M. C. A., the Yo Eddies and the Mothers' Home Guard used it for dormitory and canteen purposes in administering to the comfort of returning soldiers.

The ancient building was torn down in the summer of 1920, in the incredibly short time of two months. The foundation lay open to the winds of heaven all winter long, exposing to the curious and incurious alike a modest granite marker in the rear, erected on the site of the First House of Bethlehem, in 1892, by the Sesqui Centennial Committee, and directly above the Great Spring whose gushing waters were the invitation to settle at their source.

In recent years, due chiefly to the enormous plant of the Bethlehem Steel Company, the community has grown rapidly. The boroughs of Bethlehem and South Bethlehem were consolidated into one city in 1918, later annexing considerable outlying territory to the northwest, north, northeast and southeast, also the Borough of Northampton Heights. At the present time the City has a population of approximately 60,000 within its confines, with probably 15,000 more in the near vicinity embracing the Boroughs of Fountain Hill, Freemansburg and Hellertown. The western boundary line of the City of Bethlehem meets the

eastern boundary line of the City of Allentown, its eastern boundary line meets the western boundary line of the Borough of Freemansburg, and its southern boundary line meets the northern boundary line of the Borough of Hellertown. The City has an area of 17.79 square miles.

Owing to the City's growth in importance and population it was considered highly necessary that Bethlehem have a modern, fire-proof hotel. The Eagle Hotel and the Sun Inn, both of which in the old days were justly famous, together with the other hotels in the City, no longer met the requirements of the times. This necessity became particularly acute during the World War, when in Bethlehem were gathered men of high military importance from England, many countries of Europe, South America, and all parts of the United States. The idea of a modern hotel for Bethlehem was fostered by the Chamber of Commerce, which, after studying and investigating the question, appointed a committee of prominent business men and distinguished citizens to handle the project.

The committee was unanimous in its opinion that a new hotel was a vital necessity. It was estimated that a hotel such as would meet the requirements and prestige of the City would cost approximately $1,000,000. Stock subscriptions were solicited. The committee received splendid encouragement from the Bethlehem Steel Company and its high officials, including Mr. Schwab and Mr. Grace.

The Bethlehem Hotel Corporation was incorporated September 13, 1920, under the laws of the State of Pennsylvania, with a capital stock of $500,000 and 2500 shares of common stock of no par value, and $500,000 in first mortgage bonds. The Corporation

organized with the following Board of Directors and Officers:

Directors,—Francis Dykes, William J. Heller, James E. Mathews, W. B. Myers, E. H. Schwab, Robert E. Wilbur, Warren A. Wilbur; Officers,—William J. Heller, President; Francis Dykes, Vice-President; W. B. Myers, Treasurer; A. H. Buck, Secretary; Herbert J. Hartzog, Counsel. This Corporation acquired the old Eagle Hotel property, which it purchased from the George H. Myers Estate at the very nominal sum of $75,000. Ritter & Shay, of Philadelphia, were engaged as the Architects. After plans for a 200-room hotel were finally prepared and accepted, the John R. Wiggins Company, Inc., of Philadelphia, was awarded the contract to erect the hotel. Work was commenced March 3, 1921. The total cost of the project when completed will be in the neighborhood of $1,000,000.00, as originally estimated. It will cost from $150,000.00 to $175,000.00 additional to furnish the hotel. The success of the hotel undertaking was due entirely to the wonderful co-operation received on all sides. The citizens of Bethlehem, practically to a man, boosted the undertaking.

All the structural steel used in this building was manufactured by the Bethlehem Steel Company at its Bethlehem plant. The columns and beams are known to the trade as "Bethlehem shapes." They are rolled in one piece instead of being built up as are the large columns and beams of other steel manufacturers. The Bethlehem Steel Company has the exclusive right of manufacture of this famous type of structural steel. The steel is being erected by the Bethlehem Fabricators, Inc., a local concern, with its plant on the north bank of the Lehigh River, in that part of the

City known as the West Side, a section once given over entirely to the red men, although included in the original purchase made by the Moravians.

Within a stone's throw of the hotel there still stands the first blacksmith shop, known to us for many years as the home of Frank Krause. Here the simpler needs of man were cared for, as well as those of beasts. Locks were made, household hardware manufactured, and certain simple stove plates and oven doors. Eventually this became a small iron foundry, and was used as such until a larger foundry was built on Sand Island by Charles F. Beckel shortly after the opening of the canal in 1829, to be followed in its turn by the Bethlehem Iron Co., across the river, now become the Bethlehem Steel Co., whose genii rubbed their lamps,—and behold! this palace of steel, a building for the ages.

THE foregoing is the reprint of a brief history of the site of the new Hotel Bethlehem, read by Mrs. J. Upton Myers on the occasion of the laying of the cornor stone of the new structure on Wednesday, June 1, 1921.

This history is being published by the Bethlehem Chamber of Commerce, which has been the actuating force in this project.

It is felt that this brief history of the site of the new Hotel Bethlehem would be incomplete, if no reference was made to the organization which brought the new hotel into being.

The Bethlehem Chamber of Commerce had felt for a long time that one of the greatest needs of the city was a modern hotel structure with modern up-to-the-minute appointments. After much time, thought and labor had been devoted to the subject, the Chamber, through a committee, who labored long and earnestly, was enabled to secure the funds necessary for the erection of the hotel.

This hotel project is, in the fullest sense of the word, a "community" project, for the Chamber has received the enthusiastic support of progressive citizens, of whom approximately five hundred are subscribers of funds for the erection of the hotel.

The original hotel committee, which was later augmented, was composed of W. J. Heller, Francis Dykes and R. E. Wilbur. The result of their labors in a search for the best, in arousing interest, and in winning support for the project is seen in the structure which is rapidly being reared and which it is hoped to complete by May, 1922.

LANDLORDS OF THE EAGLE HOTEL

Charles D. Bishop	1823-1825
Christian Knauss	1825-1828
Zebulon Wells	1828-1832
Jacob Luckenbach	1832-1833
Philip Brong	1833-1834
Samuel Ziegler	1834-1836
Thomas Morgan	1836-1837
Jacob Freeman	1837-1843
Caleb Yohe	1843-1874
Mrs. M. B. Hoppes	1874-1910
Charles Duffy	1910-1911
E. G. Kimble Karl Kimble	1911-1914
George Lindenkohl	1914-1919

HOTEL COMMITTEE

Appointed by the Chamber of Commerce

Archibald Johnston,
H. E. Lewis,
A. C. Dodson,
W. R. Coyle,
H. J. Meyers,
W. B. Myers,
C. T. Hess,
Eldredge Wilbur,
W. A. Wilbur,
R. P. Hutchinson,
W. S. Hutchinson,
E. H. Schwab,
J. E. Mathews,
Francis Dykes,
R. E. Wilbur,
A. N. Cleaver,
C. M. Stauffer,
Robert Pfeifle,
F. P. Snyder,
Harry Ache,
O. F. Reinhard,
H. A. Foering,
W. W. Peters,
G. T. Haskell,
Jos. McGarr,
P. J. Byrne,
John Kurtz,
W. J. Heller.